

Ancient stone steps and a northern English dialect (only published on archive.org)

Written and published by Linden Alexander Pentecost, published in the UK and only on archive.org. Published on the 3rd of December 2024. This article is completely separate from any of my work on related subjects published in books or in online website articles and is one of my works only published on archive.org. The photo of the author climbing the steps on the Great Stone of Fourstones was taken by my father and used here with his permission, he did not ask to have his name included in the article, although he is also a writer and publisher of his own subjects. The article contains the sections: *Introduction*; *The Great Stone of Fourstones and the ancient steps, and a dream*; *Some interesting words in the local Lunesdale dialect*; *References*. Article contains 4 pages, the fourth page has writing on around 2 thirds of the page, but the others are full of writing and with one photo. The font is mainly size 9 but this section is mainly in size 8 with the paragraph below being in size 9. *This article is dedicated to my ancient family and ancestors in Lancashire.*

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Note that in a few days (perhaps tomorrow or some time this week) I should have published a completely different article in the Silly Linguistics magazine, titled: *The Doric Scots tongue, language in Aberdeenshire, and polyandrous Attacotti*. I also recently published an unrelated article on one of my websites, titled: *47: The root "häme" - "Suomi" - "samay" and polygonal masonry in Finland* (available at: <https://www.bookofdunbarra.co.uk/website-articles-46-55/47-the-root-haeme-suomi-samay-and-polygonal-masonry-in-finland>). Note that before the aforementioned article I also published an article/work, also only on archive.org, titled: *Second Version Of Scottish Gaelic Dialects Of The Outer Hebrides, And With Comments On Spirituality And On Folk Beliefs (standalone Article, Only Published On Archive.org)*

Introduction

In this short article I want to discuss some new topics in relation to northern Lancashire, its ancient history and dialect. I have discussed and published about the Celtic, and pre-Celtic (what I would deem "Setantii") history of northern Lancashire elsewhere and southern Cumbria, and have discussed the Cumbrian dialect elsewhere, but in this article I wanted to focus on some different aspects of this ancient and beautiful region which is in part my ancestral home. The article will continue after the next sub-title and photo. The primary focus of this article will be on the "Lunesdale" region and north Bowland.

The Great Stone of Fourstones and the ancient steps, and a dream

The coastal facing hills of Northern Lancashire contain a number of potential archaeological sites I have identified with my eyes, but which are to my knowledge not recorded. Some of them are large earthworks, with large rocks or megaliths placed to form part of the edges and borders of these earthworks. Some of them occur near Warton and Carnforth on Morecambe Bay, and I have studied those to the north of there more intensely. South of Carnforth there appear to be several such monuments in the Kellet area, and south towards the northern and southern slopes of the Lune Valley. There are of course the famous potentially prehistoric rock-cut graves at Heysham which I have published in detail about elsewhere. Going inland along the Lune Valley, there is a significant site which I only visited recently (in November 2024), but which I wanted to take a look at for a long time. This is known as the "Great Stone of Fourstones". In the local dialect this may originally have been pronounced something like (and written as): * **T' Girt Steean o' Fourstans** or something similar. This is a large boulder, of the type said to be an erratic, and was, presumably, one of four stones, the other three stones having very unfortunately been destroyed or removed, but the "pits" in which the stones appear to have sat are I think still visible around the Great Stone of Fourstones, if indeed that is what these pits are. There is a legend that this stone was dropped by the Devil when making Devil's Bridge in Kirkby Lonsdale, up valley. Perhaps in the original version of this legend it was a "giant" who threw this stone and not a devil, as this would match up to similar giant legends across Europe. According to the plaque located close to the parking site which is not far from the stone itself, it is alluded to that there is a legend that the Great Stone of Fourstones was said to be "hurled" by Finn

McCool (*Fionn Mac Cumhail*). This would indeed line up perfectly with my research on how this part of England has ancient historic ties with Ireland, although apart from this plaque I have found no other references connecting the site to Finn McCool, not that I doubt this information, but I need to have a bit more evidence before ascribing this legend to the region's prehistory.



*Photo above: a photo of myself, the author, taken for me by my dad and used here with his permission. The photo above shows the Great Stone of Fourstones, **T' Girt Steean o' Fowerstans**, showing the angle of the small, but steep steps leading upwards. Taken in November 2024. More description continues below.*

The age of the steps carved into the Great Stone of Fourstones is unknown, but I think it likely that the steps began to be worn by feet back in the Neolithic period or earlier. The site was also a place of meetings, it was a boundary, and in an area connected to witches and ancient traditions (although there is no connection I know of between this stone and witches per-se, but rather with a “devil” and with Finn McCool, as mentioned). On the top of the stone there are also several cup markings, I do not know if these align in any way or form of a symbolic pattern, but I will look into this for a future publication. This must have been an ancient sacred site, the “devil” and “giant” aspects to the mythological landscape being I think representations of tellings of the ancestral spiritual power inherent within the site and its relationship to other sites. For me, climbing these steps felt somewhat to be a symbolic journey to a place of some of my ancestors from North Lancashire.

I once had a dream several years ago, which I have not discussed or told the symbolism of before, a dream not of the Great Stone of Fourstones, but rather a dream in which I saw myself walking up other steps in a cliff face, the image in the dream had somewhat similar geometry to that in the image on this page, although in the dream, it was a different place, and I saw people laugh at me as I saw myself as I tried to “walk up” a mountain face. Only, as the angle changed and I became my own body in the dream, I saw that from a certain angle there were indeed steps cut into the mountain, steps which were invisible to anyone not viewing the mountain from the exact angle which I was. If visiting the Great Stone of Fourstones was, for me, symbolically representative of

“climbing” a sacred mountain to communicate with my ancestors, then perhaps the dream I had years ago, seeing myself walk up the mountain, was representative of a similar thing. Although the primary point of the dream was that I, to other people, appeared ludicrous, doing something impossible, as from their angle they saw only a steep mountain cliff. Whereas from my angle, there were steps, gentle steps, as though placed there by god, providing a perfectly safe route up the mountain, even though these steps were completely invisible to everybody else in that scene.

Some interesting words of the local Lunesdale dialect

Despite having ancestry from Lancashire on my mum's side, I do not know a great deal of the dialect traditional dialects. I have studied those of Cumbria to a greater extent, but here I will introduce the dialect with some word examples. In many ways the dialect of Bowland and Lunesdale resembles more that of southern (particularly south-western Cumbria) than it does other dialects in Lancashire, at least to some degree. Sometimes the dialect of northern Bowland from my experience more closely resembles the dialects of the Morecambe Bay area, than it resembles the dialect of say Kendal or Sedbergh which are more inland, although this whole area contains much the same language, with local variations even down to each small valley or village, for example, whether one says “yam” for “home” or whether one says “hiam” for “home”. “Yam” is the more general Cumbria pronunciation. Note that previously I have spelled Cumbrian dialect using a spelling system with some special characters, I will not however be using this system in this article, hence why I spell “The Great Stone of Fourstones” as **T’ Girt Steean o’ Fowerstans** and spell this word as **steean** rather than *stian*. I also use the spelling *steean* with regard to the Whitby dialect of Yorkshire in one of my recently published PDF only ebooks, titled: *Tsunami mysteries, tufter, drauger, celestial wheels of light, and prehistoric cultures – a book only published in PDF format, 18/10/2024 published via BookofDunbarra, which is based in the UK*. I have come across some very interesting words which would have applied to the Lunesdale and North Bowland areas, I found these in the book: *A GLOSSARY OF THE DIALECT OF THE HUNDRED OF LONSDALE, NORTH AND SOUTH OF THE SANDS, IN THE COUNTY OF LANCASHIRE. BY THE LATE ROBERT BACKHOUSE PEACOCK : EDITED BY THE REV. J. C. ATKINSON*. Note that the area discussed in this book includes “Lunesdale”, with the older spelling of Lonsdale, and to some extent this would include the northernmost parts of Bowland.

Some of these words are discussed here after some basic dialect info. All words from the aforementioned book are given the reference (1). Not all the words on in bold are from this source, some are from local knowledge of the dialect I have picked up more generally. First of all, one spelling adaption I have written in Cumbrian dialect would I think be appropriate for writing the dialect of North Bowland and Lunesdale. In Northwestern Lancashire, as in many parts of Cumbria, [au] is [ʊu] (written here as **uu**) as in many parts of Cumbria, and I have previously published on Cumbrian dialect with this spelling. Examples for , for example, the words “out”, “house” and “mouse” I would write as **uut**, **huus** and **muus**. One of the most interesting features of the dialect I think is that it used some different pronouns. The pronoun **oo** (1) means “he” or “she” in Lunesdale dialect, often *hoo* means “she” in other parts of Lancashire. This pronoun is likely related to North-Germanic forms, e.g. Western Norwegian *ho* - “she”, Danish *hun* - “she”, Icelandic *hún* - “she” and to Old English *héo* - “she” and Middle English *heo* - “he”. In addition there is a separate pronoun just for “she”, but this is not “she” but rather **shoo** (1) or **sho** (1). 5 other interesting words from source (1) are given below, particularly words which pertain to the local folk religion in some way:

1). **thunner-stan** (1) - this means “thunder stone”. I have written a lot about “thunder stones” in Cumbria, which are large erratics with symbolic rain and thunder meanings, I believe. However the **thunner-stans** of north Lancashire whilst etymologically of the same meaning, were said to be “quartzose” (1) pebble, i.e. stones containing quartz, and there is some implication in source (1) that these stones were emitted by thunder. Note that whilst I write “stone” as **steean** in this dialect, only a single vowel is present in the **stan** (stone) in the word **thunner-stan**, indicating that the position of stress plays a role in the pronunciation of this word. This is also why I have spelled “The Great Stone of Fourstones” as **T’ Girt Steean o’ Fowerstans**.

2). **star slubber** (1) - a jelly-like substance seen in fields after rain. This substance is of unknown origin, and it is curious that in source (1) it is connected to rain. I have read suggestion that this substance is formed from “atmospheric cryptids”, i.e. invisible beings that are said by some to inhibit the atmosphere. According to the article “Atmospheric Beasts” on the cryptidz-fandom.com wiki, these beings were known simply as *It* in the

Shetland Islands (2). Presumably this word in Shetlandic is distinguished from the word *hit* which is the general Shetlandic word for English "it".

3). **Noah's Arks** (1) - in source (1) and therefore in Lunesdale, **Noah's Arks** did not just refer to the Biblical Ark but also to clouds which were cirrus shaped, thought to be a warning of coming rain. In source (1) it is implied that in Cleveland a similar noun is used but that in this case "Noah" is actually a form of the name "Odin", which is an interesting idea. It is interesting that this noun and the previous one, **star slubber** both connect to atmospheric, supernatural or holy beings or powers of some nature. The next word also relates to this in a more auditory sense.

4). **"call"** (1) - the **"call"** according to source (1) **"call"** exists in the dialect with a meaning more specific than that of the word "call" in English in general. In source (1) and thus in the Lunesdale area **call** is a peculiar sighing in the air that indicates a storm approaching, which like the previous two words is also a mythological phenomena connected to the atmosphere, albeit **call** is a different aspect of these phenomena.

5). **man** (1) - a pile of stones or turf placed on the highest part of a mountain. I have previously discussed this root a lot with regard to the "Cumbric" language. The word **man** in source (1) is clearly connected to this root, which I will demonstrate as being related to Welsh *maen* - "stone" and Cornish *mên* - "stone". I have provided evidence elsewhere that the root is pre-Indo-European in origin, and may also occur in for example Salishan languages and others in the Americas. The example **man** from this dialect is likely closely connected to the meaning in the place-name "The Old Man of Coniston", I mountain I have written about extensively in what was northern Lancashire, but now Cumbria. The **man** of Coniston could be the cairn on the mountaintop rather than the mountain itself, I now realise. And **man** in this context could also refer not just to stone or rock, but to the living aspect of that stone and rock, a deity or guardian of sorts also symbolically similar to a "man", other examples being the "Old Man of Storr" on Skye and the "Old Man of Hoy" and "Old Man of Stoer" in Sutherland.

I hope that this article was an interesting read, and I will publish more on this dialect in the future. These words help to demonstrate the mythological and spiritual background cultures of the Lunesdale area, in ways that are not often discussed, despite the area's mythological significance.

References

Words and descriptions marked with (1) are from the already mentioned reference: *A GLOSSARY OF THE DIALECT OF THE HUNDRED OF LONSDALE, NORTH AND SOUTH OF THE SANDS, IN THE COUNTY OF LANCASHIRE. BY THE LATE ROBERT BACKHOUSE PEACOCK : EDITED BY THE REV. J. C. ATKINSON.* Note that when I quote words from the source above I sometimes do not provide the translation of the word exactly as given in source (1) but sometimes provide a simpler translation or say it in my own words, but still accurate to the translation.

Source (2) is the brief reference to the Shetlandic word *It* for describing an atmospheric cryptid, source (2) referring to the article *Atmospheric Beasts* on the cryptidz-fandom.com wiki

No other sources were needed in writing this article, which comes from my own research.